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NEWS

Winchester Select Board imposes strict conditions on dog after child bite

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

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Strict conditions are being imposed by the Select Board on a local family after their dog bit a 6-year-old child. COURTESY PHOTO/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/WAYNE WILKINSON

A Winchester Labradoodle that bit a 6-year-old boy requiring eig
must be muzzled in public, confined behind a 6-foot fence and u

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continued training under conditions imposed by the Select Board after unanimously finding the dog to be a “nuisance.”

The board voted 5-0 on July 28 to impose six specific conditions on Jack, a 30-pound dog owned by the Spence family, following a two-part hearing that concluded the animal posed a community safety risk after multiple biting incidents.

The most restrictive measures require Jack to be muzzled and leashed with a 3-foot tether whenever outside his owners’ fenced yard. The Spence family must install a 6-foot fence at their new residence with warning signage before Jack can live there.

“Jack shall be secured with a leash or tethering device not exceeding 3 feet in length and having a minimum tensile strength of 300 pounds, and in addition, Jack shall be securely and humanely muzzled at such times,” the board’s written order states.

The family must also carry $100,000 in liability insurance specifically covering potential claims from Jack’s actions. If they cannot obtain coverage, they have 30 days to provide proof of reasonable efforts to secure such insurance.

Dog trainer Emilio Marotta from Lorenzo’s Dog Training Team, hired by the Spences for approximately $3,500, must continue working with Jack indefinitely. The board specifically requires following Marotta’s protocols, including crate training and constant supervision.

“Jack requires a far more regimented routine than that to which he had become accustomed,” Marotta testified, describing the dog as needing strict controls including never being allowed to roam free.

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Under Marotta's regimen, Jack must always be either crated, positioned on a designated "spot" even when doorbells ring, or leashed — including inside his own house. The dog cannot be outside unattended in his fenced yard and is prohibited from hanging out car windows.

The conditions also ban Jack from Vinson-Owen Elementary School property, addressing concerns from Richard Mucci, a former Select Board member whose new neighborhood the Spence family is moving into.

"There is no fence on that property. It is very close to an active sidewalk," Mucci testified, noting the elementary school sits less than 1,000 feet away with dozens of children walking past daily.

Annual licensing and vaccination requirements round out the restrictions, with written proof required to be provided to the Animal Control Officer within five business days.

The May 12 incident that triggered the hearing occurred when the Murphy family's son entered the Spence yard to retrieve a ball. Jack bit the child, causing deep wounds that required hospitalization at Boston Children's Hospital when he developed a 104-degree fever requiring intravenous antibiotics.

Testimony revealed Jack had previously bitten another child in April, prompting concerns about repeat incidents.

Select Board member Michael Bettencourt emphasized the importance of monitoring compliance with the conditions.

Town Counsel Stephen Chaplin noted violations could result in criminal charges or civil court proceedings seeking injunctions.

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The written decision may be appealed to District Court within 10 days of issuance.

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Sen. Jason Lewis, Mass. Senate strengthen fair housing protections for renters, buyers

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

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'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. Set in the 1920s, this iconic production is sure to leave the audience wanting more. Performances will

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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